Welcome to the quarterly news bulletin of Search for Common Ground (Search) – Nepal. The bulletin enlists, news, information, and success stories of our on-going projects, and also includes best practices, innovative and promising approaches in the field of conflict transformation and peacebuilding. This edition consists of insights and viewership details of our recent media offering, ‘Pahunch’: reality TV game show, and innovations in the field of educational governance with the use of mobile application to hone social accountability and governance knowledge of public schools. The bulletin also features success stories, which reflects the behavior level change in our target groups in understanding various aspects of conflict and peacebuilding.

We hope that the enlisted content will be effective in honing your understanding about our work, and the approaches we employ in fostering dialogue between different actors and stakeholders to enrich their commitment to upscale peace in their communities.

Do send us your feedback at sfcgnepal@sfcg.org

As part of our UKAID funded project, ‘Pahunch’, Search for Common Ground (Search) - Nepal, along with production partner, Mila Production produced a 13-episode reality TV game show, ‘Pahunch’ (ACCESS). The first-of-its-kind police-public reality TV game show was designed to strengthen trust and collaboration between the police and the public. The game show aired from Nepal Television (NTV) embraced the principle of peacebuilding—by evoking empathy towards the work of the police, to address disparity and mistrust.

Eight participants from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds were featured as contestants, and were given a unique opportunity to get training from the Nepal Police themselves. Notions of the police being draconian were busted, as the participants were exposed to the real work of the Nepal Police. “I feared the Nepal Police before. But after being a...
part of the reality TV game show, and getting trained and mentored by the police, I feel I can trust them. They are here for our security, and we shouldn’t fear them. Instead, we should support them,” shared, Sophie Sunuwar, a LGBTI advocate, and one of the participant of the reality TV game show.

The viewership survey conducted by Search indicates that 1.128 million viewers watched the reality TV game show, and out of the 24 most watched TV programs in the country, the reality show has been ranked 8th. More than three fourth of the respondents stated that the reality TV game show educated them about the role and responsibility of the police. Many respondents stated that reality TV show was an effective medium to change preconceived notions and attitudes, and the reality show has been successful in humanizing the police, and educating people about the work of the police to strengthen peace and security.

**NEPAL VOTES: FROM MEDIATING CONFLICTS TO ELECTIONS**

The successful completion of the local elections pedestals Nepal’s commitment to a peaceful and democratic transition to a federal structure of governance. The 73.69% voter turn out in the polling station reflects a tectonic shift in people’s attitude towards governance, and the increased inclination towards being a part of the governance process of the country. The elections also addressed the gender disparity witnessed in political structure, often defined by a patriarchal political architecture. This notion was shunned with 40% women elected in local level bodies. The election also saw a manifold participation of community mediators trained by Search for Common Ground in the 11 districts of the Terai region, who filed their candidacy in province number 1,2, and 5.

The community mediators were trained under the UKAID funded project, Pahunch – a project that aims to strengthen the access of justice and security of the marginalized population. Out of the 2336 community mediators trained by Search, 315 (13%) mediators were nominated as candidates from Siraha, Mahottari, Sarlahi, Rautahat, Nawalparasi, Rupandehi, Kapilvastu, and Dang. A quick review of their candidacy profile shows that 119 (38%) were elected in different positions in the rural and urban municipalities. Out of the elected pool, 36 (11%) women candidates were elected. The success garnered by community mediators during the elections pedestals the fact that people are more inclined to leadership that is unbiased, and collaborative in nature. A recent survey by Search suggests that, community mediators wield unprecedented support in their communities, and are considered a trusted force to reckon with.

Srijana Chhettri (name changed), 17, from Rupandehi was walking towards her home when she was cornered by a group of hoodlums in a dark street. “A group of men approached me, and one of them tried to grab my neck. I took a deep breath, and kicked the predator in his crotch area, and then screamed,” shares, Chhettri. “People heard my scream, and they came outside the streets. The hooligans were confused, and started running. The self-defense training and the practical survival tips helped me to deal with the situation in an effective manner. Later, I went to the police station and reported the crime,” narrates the young survivor.

The self-defense training is a part of our UKAID funded project, Pahunch. The training is designed to capacitate adolescent girls to skillfully tackle with life-threatening and harmful situations. The evidence-based training encompasses audio, visual, and physical training, and training modules crafted to empower adolescent girls to deal with situations related to sexual harassment, physical assault, and violent sexual crimes. Situational analysis, and anxiety control skills are also imparted. Altogether, 409 adolescent girls in Dang, Kapilvastu, Rupandehi, Nawalparasi, Kathmandu, Sarlahi, Mahottari, and Sunsari have been trained by Search for Common Ground, with support from self-defense training provider, Paritran. The training manual on Sexual Violence Risk Reduction is available in both Nepali and English and can be downloaded from www.sfcg.org/nepal
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of teachers in school, and also strengthen public involvement in school governance. “The mobile application consists of information on school governance, and Social Accountability Tools (SATs). The interactive nature of the mobile application will definitely pave way for improved internal governance in public schools,” shared, Dal Sunar, the project lead of ‘Hamro Shikshya’ project.

The mobile application is divided in two parts; i) The Public domain is accessible to the public, and they can view news, updates, and browse through finger-tip version of school governance rules, regulations, and entitlements, ii) The Private domain of the application will be accessible to partner schools. Partner schools affiliated to the, ‘Hamro Shikshya’ project will be provided access to log in and submit documents such as, social audits, financial audits, public hearing, organization charts, child club management details, etc. Status of School Management Committees (SMCs), and Parent Teacher Association (PTA), monitoring data of schools, teacher training and budget status will also be made available in the mobile application.

“The mobile application also contributes to ensure availability of textbooks, scholarship provisions, and wash facilities by providing real time data of schools to local bodies and policy makers,” opined, Sunar. The evidences and data garnered from the mobile application will be shared in local and national policy dialogues to ensure meaningful ratification in education policies through evidence-driven approaches. The mobile application will be launched in November. The test version of the mobile application can be downloaded from https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.lpt.hamroshikshya&hl=en

SEARCH NEPAL RELEASES SIX ISSUE PAPERS

Search for Common Ground Nepal, as part of the Singha Durbar Project released six different Issue Papers based on the policy driven initiatives in the country. Dinesh Kumar Thapaliya and Purusottam Nepal, Secretary and Joint Secretary of Secretary of Ministry of Federal Affair and Local Development (MoFALD), along with Sumitra Manandhar, Democracy and Governance Specialist of USAID, jointly showcased the six Issue Papers and released it formally.

Issue papers on - Agriculture and Food Security, Disaster Risk Reduction, Health and Nutrition, Migration and Trafficking, Federalism and Constitution Implementation, and Climate Change were released. Search Nepal is currently working on two more Issue Papers on Education and Local Governance.

Releasing the Issue Papers, Dinesh Kumar Thapaliya, Secretary of Federal Affair and Local Development (MoFALD), said, “These Policy driven Issue Papers are very helpful in the new federal structure,” adding, “These papers can support in the local development of the Provinces as they can formulate laws and policies on their own.”
CONSULTATION TO UNDERSTAND THE ROLE OF YOUTH IN POST-CONFLICT SCENARIO

With the aim to inform the UN Secretary General’s Progress Study on United Nation Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 on Youth, Peace, and Security, Search conducted a series of Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), Key Informant Interview (KII), and field-study in 7 sample districts: Kailali, Rolpa, Bardiya, Kapilvastu, Gorkha, Rauthat and Saptari. Through qualitative data collection, Search documented the voices, concerns, and opinions of youth on – post-conflict youth issues, youth participation in decision-making, stigma and discrimination faced by youth involved in conflict, and trends of re-recruitment of youth in violent groups.

The consultations with the youth directly involved during the conflict echoed their frustration, and a state of powerlessness, which has further triggered negativity towards the state. Similarly, many also shared their realization of being manipulated by the political parties who treat them as political ‘pawns,’ to engage in violent activities. The youth participants during the consultation stressed on the positive portrayal of youth as, ‘change makers,’ by promoting peacebuilding activities being heralded by the youth in their communities. The report will be published soon.

PROJECT UPDATE

COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP PROJECT (CLP)

Search for Common Ground (Search) Nepal is implementing a 9-month Collaborative Leadership Project (CLP) to promote the political leadership of women and youth in Nepal, in collaboration with Ratauli Yuwa Club (RYC) and Sindhuli Integrated Development Services (SIDS). The project funded by Governance Facility (GF) is designed to strengthen equal opportunity and meaningful participation of women and youth in local leadership and decision-making process. The project is implemented in three districts of the country – Dhanusa, Mahottari, and Sindhuli.

The project entails leadership and governance activities such as: training to women-led judicial committees, capacity building trainings on local governance, knowledge products on entitlements provided to women and youth, development of leadership guidelines, public speaking platforms for women and youth leaders, and public-leader dialogues.

For more information about the project visit: www.sfcg.org/nepal

HOARDING BOARD FOR TRAFFIC AWARENESS

Under the UKAID funded project, ‘Pahunch’ (ACCESS), Search collaborated with Nepal Police to develop traffic awareness messages to sensitize people about traffic rules. Hoarding boards with vivid illustrations and messages were developed and placed in the Nepal Police headquarters. “The hoarding boards with traffic rule messages are placed strategically in the petrol pump outside the Nepal Police headquarters. This helps build awareness and impact,” shared, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Sabin Pradhan. The traffic-related hoarding boards are a part of the Information, Education, and Communications (IEC) component of the project.